

(1989). Lead paint in California migrant housing camps: Results of childhood lead screening, Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology Section, California Department of Health Services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In early 1988, the discovery of the past use of lead-based paint on state-owned migrant housing operated by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) prompted a program to eliminate potential exposures to the paint and to test children occupying these houses. This report presents results of the childhood blood lead testing.

Lead paint was found in 20 state-owned migrant camps located in 12 counties, where between an estimated 1,200 to 1,600 young children lived. Blood specimens were collected from 804 children that were analyzed for lead and free erythrocyte protoporphyrin (FEP). Three counties performed second screenings for 73 children. Of the 804 children initially tested, three had blood lead levels exceeding the current U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) definition of elevated blood lead of ≥ 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$. None of these cases required medical treatment and within two months all blood lead values fell to <10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$. County investigators did not implicate paint as the lead source, nor were they able to identify any other environmental sources.

This childhood lead screening program demonstrated that DHCD's prompt attention directed at correcting this potential hazard through appropriate methods succeeded in averting exposures to children currently living in the housing camps, as well as prevented future exposures. No measurable lead exposure from the paint appears to have occurred, despite the real potential hazard. Abatement methods that minimized the dispersion of lead paint into the environment probably played a major role in preventing excessive lead exposure. Training on recommended screening, medical, and environmental interventions for the prevention and treatment of childhood lead poisoning was needed for participating local health officials. This program illustrates that the potential for misapplication of lead-based paint continues to exist and that awareness of the problem on the part of housing agencies and owners is needed.